

# THE CATHOLIC ART QUARTERLY



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# THE CATHOLIC ART QUARTERLY

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## DISCOURSES & INTUITIONS

Occasionally there are misunderstandings regarding the value of causal analysis so often referred to in the pages of the *Quarterly*. On the one hand, some have misgivings because such analysis seems unable to provide judgments of beauty. On the other hand, claims have been made for its use that cannot be substantiated. It should not be difficult to correct these misunderstandings if we distinguish the process of reasoning and intuition involved in the creation and criticism of works of art.

The discursive intellect deals with truth. It can draw general truths from particulars, and particular truths from established principles. It can analyze and it can synthesize; it can induce and deduce. Its efficiency is increased if it makes use of analysis by causes. In the study of an object made by man, the discursive intellect can tell us a great deal that is useful for artists and critics to know, but it can tell us exactly nothing about whether or not the object is beautiful. If we want an aesthetic judgment, we must look elsewhere.

It is the intuitive intellect that instructs us regarding beauty. Just as the eye brings us accounts of light, and the ear of sounds, so the intuition brings us accounts of order. It is an instrument attuned to order as a set of scales is an instrument attuned to weights. The scales will give you a dispassionate account of the weight of whatever you put into its pan. It will not tell you why, or how, an object has such a weight, or under what conditions the weight would be different. For those who know how to use it, it answers just one question. So it

is with the intuition. It is a faculty attuned to the perfection of formal causes. The senses are aware of the material aspect of a thing, but the intellect is aware of its formal aspect which shines forth from the material and is apprehended with joy. This special kind of joy is known as aesthetic, and it is the mark of the perfection of the object. Just as the balances cannot tell you why or how the object weighs what it does, but only what it weighs, so the aesthetic intuition cannot tell you why or how its object is perfect, but only to what degree it is so. It can neither argue nor debate, but can only state its aesthetic findings arbitrarily and bluntly.

Thus, these two special activities of the intellect, reasoning and intuition, work together in a wonderful reciprocity. Intuition tells whether or not this object is, in its own kind, perfect or imperfect, though it cannot tell why or how. Reasoning, blind to beauty as it is, can demonstrate the reasons for the perfection or imperfection of an object. In separation, neither of these activities is sufficient for the working artist. Together they give him all the criticism that he needs. He pauses in his work and uses the "aesthetic check." He then reasons upon his aesthetic insight, his reasoning being generally effective in proportion to his habit of thinking in terms of the causes. We believe that the work done by the authors of "The Wheel of Artifice," of which Part III appears in this issue, puts a finer edge on the tool of causal analysis; but no amount of discursive reasoning and no amount of whetting of the edges of its tools can alter the fact that "the eye is the ultimate judge."



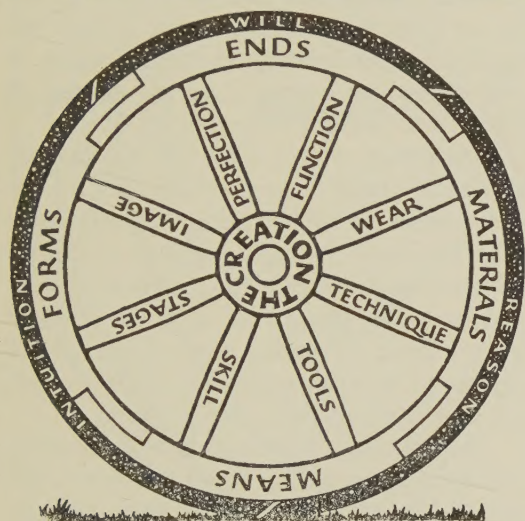
# THE WHEEL OF ARTIFICE

## PART III

By John Howard Benson  
and Graham Carey

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the first two parts of this essay<sup>1</sup> we dealt with some of the realities of the artistic process by using a diagram of an eight spoked wheel to explain their relationship. Such a figure allows one to take in the details of a rather complicated subject in one glance, and illustrates the balances



which must be maintained if things are to be made rightly. We reprint that diagram here, and are now, in this third part, enlarging on several points which it was possible only to hint at earlier.

In this installment we give two sets of names to the spokes. The first set is that shown on the small wheel reprinted on this page. These have the advantage of being short and convenient for everyday use, like the names *salt*, *daisy*, and *robin*. Their disadvantage is that they tell us nothing of the structure to which they belong, and their place in it. The second

set is less convenient but more instructive, like the scientific names: *Sodium chloride* (NaCl), *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* and *Turdus migratorius*. In the new diagram on page 103, and also in the text, we give both sets of names, believing that the study of the scientific set throws new light on the general argument.

We then discuss the sequence of the spokes, showing that the success of traditional productive methods is generally based on the observance of a normal sequence, while the lack of success of the anti-traditionalist is, in many cases at least, the inevitable result of trying to "run the wheel backward."

Finally, we are adding some observations on the intrinsic and extrinsic causes, and on the museum curator's problem of judging artifacts from foreign cultures.

We will not apologize for the apparent complexity of the new diagram. It is a good deal simpler than the facts it illustrates. Simple statements seldom reflect the fullness of reality.

### II. THE WHEEL SHOULD MOVE CLOCKWISE

For convenience in visualizing the various situations that we meet as we move around the wheel clockwise, we have chosen the making of a single object to illustrate them all — a silver coin.

(1) We will begin with what, in our more scientific set of names, we call MATERIAL END, and which, more colloquially, we have called *Function*. This is the end, or use, of the thing taken from the point of view of material, or use directed toward matter.

In terms of our example, it is the use of a coin, which is to be an easily portable token of value, and this determines the choice of what it is to be made of. To be a stable token of exchange the value of the

<sup>1</sup>*Catholic Art Quarterly*, Vol. XV, Nos. 2 and 3.



material must bear some fairly close relation to the token value. Because the coin should be small and light, this intrinsic value must be rather high. One of the precious metals — silver — is, therefore, selected as the

(2) FINAL MATERIAL. This is the material taken from the point of view of being used. The way the material behaves under the conditions of use is the way it wears, and the briefer term for Final Material is, accordingly, WEAR. We have decided on silver as a suitable precious material, but because, in the handling of coins the letters and emblems tend to become effaced and illegible, we choose a hard alloy, 92% silver and 8% copper. It is the practical conditions of use that determine the final material, and not *vice versa*. We do not decide on the hard alloy without reason, and then joyfully discover that our dimes and quarters will not have to be kept in little cellophane bags but can stand the rough and tumble of the market place. The normal and commonsense sequence is obvious. And, following the same principle, it is the final material that determines the nature of the

(3) INSTRUMENTAL MATERIAL, for which the shorter name is *Technique*. This is just as truly material as that of which the object is finally made, but it looks not towards the facts of use but towards the facts of making. In the case of our example it is the steel of which the dies, between which the coin is struck, are made, and the various other materials which are used in the processes of preparation and striking. It is obvious that it will be the nature of this instrumental material that will determine the nature of the tools with which it, in turn, is shaped. These tools constitute the

(4) MATERIAL MEANS. In the case of our coin they are the gravers, whet stones, punches and hammers of the die sinker. These are designed with their relationship to the steel in view. The nature of the die governs their design for otherwise they

will not be well adapted to shaping it. The *Tools*, however, in their turn, determine the kind of

(5) FORMAL MEANS with which they are to be handled, what we more briefly call *Skill*. The skill of the die sinker is not some kind of ideal skill-in-general, but a particular aptitude in handling each particular instrument. It is a practical habit, an art which is subservient to the special tool that makes it what it is. This skill, however, in its turn, determines the

(6) INSTRUMENTAL FORMS, or *Stages*, into which the process of art is divided. These forms or patterns are what they are precisely because they are governed by this, rather than by some other, skill. They are types of order looking in the direction of instruments or means. And the stages, in their turn, prescribe the nature of the

(7) FINAL FORM or *Image* to which all along they have been directed. This image is a pattern or order facing towards end. It is the image which, when it is finally imposed on the material, completes it, and makes it the thing that it is in its own special kind. It makes the object of art perfect in its species, and therefore we can say that it determines the artifact's

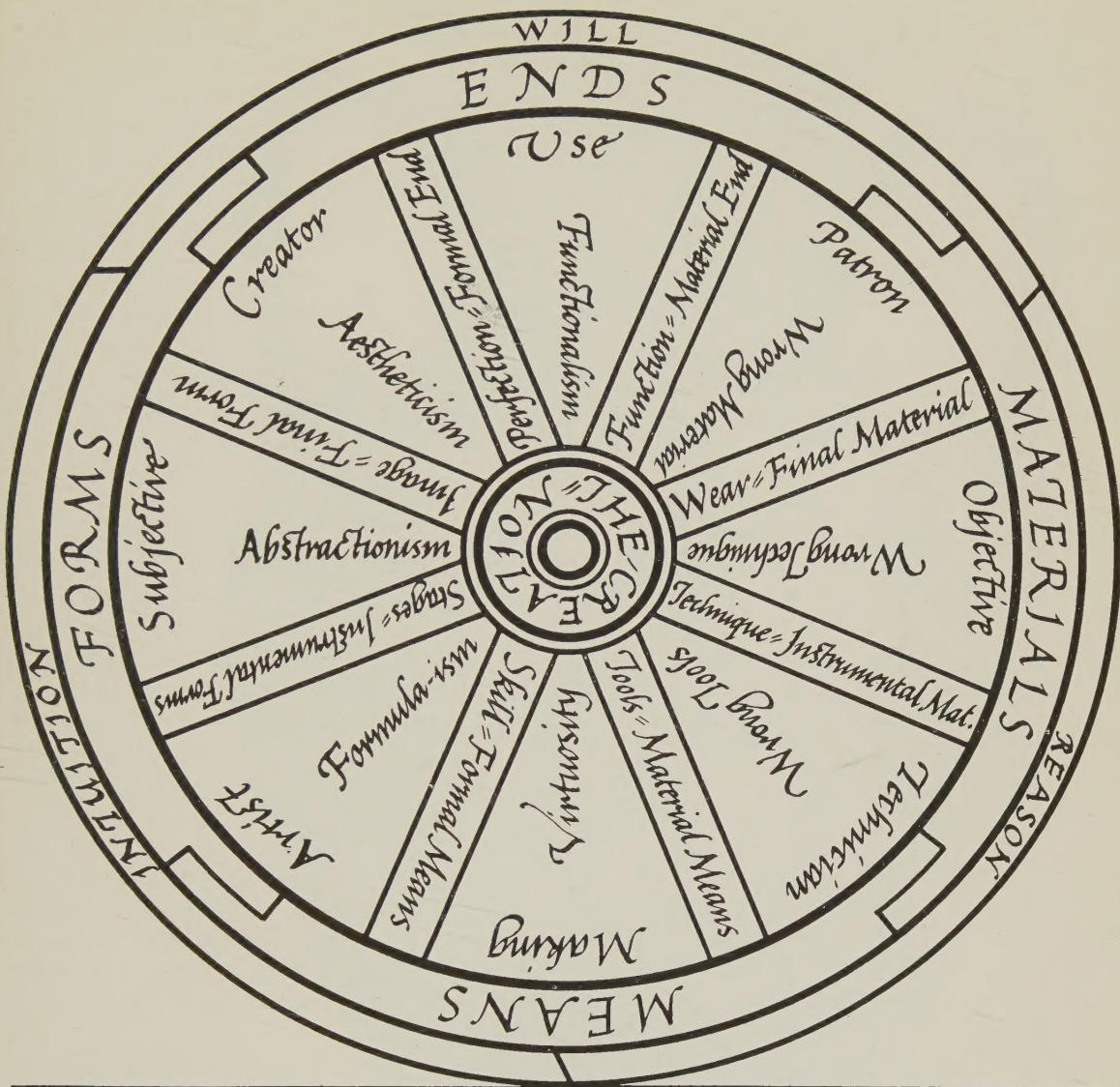
(8) FORMAL END which is *Perfection*. This perfection results from the successful imposition of a mental pattern on the material, but in its turn it determines the *Material End* or *Function* of the object inasmuch as the object can only be of use as the thing that it is and not as some other thing that it is not. If it is perfect it can function perfectly, and that is all that the spoke of function requires.

The wheel thus turns full circle, and each 45 degrees of its rotation is a logical and necessary push of cause upon effect. That the rotation should be clockwise (in terms of this particular diagram) seems to be in the very nature of reality.

### III. THE WHEEL SHOULD NOT MOVE BACKWARDS

The truth of this is made more evident if we try to roll the wheel counter-clockwise,





Anyone seriously interested in artistic and aesthetic problems will find this diagram not as difficult as it looks. The truth is seldom simple. If it were, mathematics could be mastered in a few days, philosophy and theology in a week. Reality is not like that. Those who do feel a need for clearer understanding of art will find this diagram less difficult than the problems to which it offers a solution.

Like Plato's Cave and Porphyry's Tree, this wheel is not just a pattern, but a pattern with something to say.





Attic black-figured amphora. Triptolemus with Demeter and Persephone. Sixth century, B.C.

Courtesy of Rhode Island School of Design



and lead each of the eight spokes to the next in the reverse order. For the sake of variety we will drop the example of the coin, and illustrate each of these new phases from a different art. In doing this we also hope to suggest the universality of the principle involved. If the reader has any doubt on this matter of universality of application, he can easily supply examples of all kinds for himself.

1) One who makes his Material Ends dictate a Formal End, that is, who asks Function to assert a sovereignty over Perfection, falls into *Functionalism* in the bad sense of that word. Le Corbusier's definition of a house as a *machine à habiter* denies the primacy of the imagination. It refuses to face the implications of the fact that a plan comes out of a human head, and that, important as they may be, the functions of a building are not all. "Form follows function" only after the requirements of technique and skill have been met. If, in saying "Form follows function" we mean that an image may be built up with no reference to the creative mind, to stages, to skill, to tools, and that the requirements of use alone can dictate pattern directly, then we are giving utterance to an artistic absurdity. And it is absurd to hold that the best buildings of any time or culture have been so produced. It is as absurd as it is unhistorical, and only results in fostering absurd building methods for today.

2) When the Formal End, Perfection, is made to cause the Final Form, Image, the result is another artistic abnormality — *Aestheticism*. Let us illustrate this point from painting. To the aesthetic painter the perfection of his image is more important than the nature of his image. He feels he is creating beauty, and that this is more important than the question of what thing it is that is beautiful. He acts as if he were a high priest at the altar of beauty, sacrificing for the multitude, and so is unconcerned with utilitarian questions, or with laborious instrumental and

formal methods. Such an aesthetic painter may be derivative, or naturalistic, or surrealist or anything else. He is a poor painter in that he, unconsciously perhaps, turns his back on normal final causes, and seeks to make an unspecified beauty the beginning and the end of his activity.

3) If the Final Form, Image, is made to control the Instrumental Forms, the Stages, one falls into what is often called *Abstractionism*. That the object of art has little resemblance in shape to any natural object is not the error here, but simply that this lack of shape-resemblance has the wrong reason. Sculpture furnishes us with many examples. If a natural stone is to be made into a stone figure, it becomes this through a succession of agencies, beginning with those closest to its stoney nature, and passing in an orderly sequence through those by means of which it ultimately achieves its intended purpose. When it has received only its instrumental forms, these are pleasing, and especially so to those who are in revolt against naturalism, formula-ism or technical virtuosity. They are attractive, too, to those who are incapable of carving anything more difficult. But none of these reasons is sufficient for work so vague in its orientation to use. Such an object may be harmless enough, but the claim that it represents the work of a great mind is rather preposterous. We do not expect the preliminary stages to be legible for that is not their job, but we do expect the final image to be legible.

4) Proceeding, in thought, around the circle counter-clockwise, we come to the teacher who peddles easy formulas. "This is how you draw a duck," he says. "Draw beautiful show girls like this after seven easy lessons. You, too, can be an artist. Send no money; just clip the coupon." Here is one for whom the Stages, or Instrumental Forms, are antecedent to skill. The boy who sends in the coupon has no skill, but he can be taught to copy a certain highly simplified shape well enough to satisfy himself and his equally uncritical



friends. A formula (literally, a "little shape") is substituted for a true image, and the necessity of skill is denied. No instructed person believes that the art of draughtsmanship can be so acquired. It is a swindle and we will call it *Formula-ism*.

5) When an artist's Formal Means dominate his Material Means, that is, when his skill dictates to the tools from whose use it was originally developed, he falls into *Virtuosity*. The virtuoso on the violin, for example, is a player so interested in his own skill that it assumes first place, while the optimum conditions of providing good violin music seem secondary. No one can listen to the "show off" with satisfaction very long. We can admire his dexterity, but we feel that there is something wrong. If he cared more for his fiddle and less for the suppleness of his fingers, he might be a real artist. His egotism blinds him to the simple fact that his manual skill is violin skill, acquired from practice on the violin in order to allow the violin to speak according to its own nature as nothing in the world but a violin can do. If his egotism were controlled by greater intelligence, he would understand this point, and a greater reputation would ultimately be his because he would be a greater player. The mere virtuoso would have become a true maestro.

6) If on the other hand the Tools, or Material Means, control the Instrumental Material, the result is mere bungling. A carpenter, building forms for concrete work and insisting on using a rip saw for cutting off boards; a housewife using the scissors out of her sewing basket to open a can of soup, or trying to drive a nail with the heel of her slipper; both of these place an importance on their tool out of proportion to the act it is expected to achieve. We have cross cut saws, can openers and hammers because they are the best tools for the doing of certain jobs. Those jobs can't be done well if one insists on using other and wrong tools. It is unnecessary to labor such an obvious point.

7) If the Instrumental Material or the Technique is allowed to dominate the Final Material of the artifact we have another absurdity, one which is still all too common particularly among the more old fashioned sculptors. Such a man is to supply a stone figure for a public building, and makes a model in clay. As the clay leaves his hand to be cast in plaster, it may be a fine thing, but a clay surface that is beautiful as a clay surface may be quite fussy and weak when carefully and exactly copied in stone. The human intelligence likes to see a glyptic surface on a carved stone, not a plastic one, and it intuitively understands the disharmony between the material and the shape of the statue as ugliness.

8) And last of all, there is the case where the Final Material determines the Material End or Function, i.e., the material gives orders to the use it is supposed to serve. A knife that should be made of steel, for example, is a failure when made of iron. So is a billfold that should be leather but is mostly paper or a 50-50 mixture of coffee and chicory sold for real coffee. These things — the knife, the wallet, and the package of coffee — cannot fulfill their purposes of cutting, holding money and comforting the heart because their materials prevent them from doing so. The material properly adapts itself to the use, and not the use to the material.

In each of these cases of counter-clockwise reading of the wheel, we meet an inversion of cause and effect, absurdity and their end result, which is ugliness. We are bound to fall into ugliness when we violate the laws of reality.

#### IV. A BALANCED WHEEL

We can divide the area of the wheel into halves in four ways. In the first, the words USE and MAKING are centered on halves of the wheel. In the second the words PATRON and ARTIST stand for their halves. OBJECTIVE and SUBJECTIVE make the third division of the area between them, and lastly the words TECHNICIAN and



CREATOR. We observe that the words Patron and Artist and Technician and Creator refer to human beings, and that Use and Making and Objective and Subjective are depersonalized abstractions. So the best relationship between the pairs will be one of coöperation between the people, and of balance between the ideas.

*Use vs. Making.* This division of the area of artistic production should be obvious enough. Artificial things are made and are used. Making and using are different activities, and although making can only *be* for use, it is all too easy to allow the activities to be divorced. Rightly they support one another. Pattern — what the thing is in its own kind — the Perfection with which that pattern is materialized, the Good for the achievement of which the materialization has been undertaken, and the prospect of a life of usefulness under the practical conditions of fulfillment, all these are aspects of the area covered by the single word *Use*. In the same way, the employment of technical means, the exercise of skill and the development of an orderly and practical series of creative stages, all these are aspects of *Making*. The tea pot may be a wonderful example of the ceramic art, the throwing of clay on the wheel, the firing in the kiln, the dextrous use of the brush in applying glazes, etc., but if it has an ungracious shape, if it won't pour, and if the handle breaks off when it is washed, we cannot call it a truly successful tea pot.

*Patron vs. Artist.* So much has already been written on the necessity of coöperation between these two, and in definition of the areas within which each is supreme, that no more need be added here. The necessity of coöperation should be obvious, and the areas of supremacy are indicated by the present diagram. The good patron keeps in mind that his artist is primarily a seer of solutions to problems; and the good artist keeps in mind that his patron is primarily a man in need of a tool for his own work. If each respects the validity

of the work that the other does, there need be no conflict. Trouble starts only when either the patron's idea of the good or the artist's idea of the true gets out of its appointed orbit, i.e., becomes exorbitant.

*Objective vs. Subjective.* Possible conflicts between the world of facts and the world of ideas may take many shapes. A single example is the problem of *styles*. A style is properly a typical pattern which expresses the vital facts for an individual artist or for a whole culture. It is the way in which many men bound together by a common tradition, or one man working alone, *really see* solutions to the problems of their art. It cannot be handled as if it were a commodity to be bought or sold, nor even an educational subject which can be taught and learned. A true style is as much a part of an artist as are his skin and his bones; he can no more change the color of his eyes, than he can change his style. It can unfortunately be copied, however, and the copy applied to objects where it has no relevance, and, as we all know, the results of such copying and application are universally hideous. What is called "knowing the styles" is a good example of what happens when the objective and subjective worlds are permitted to get out of their true and normal balance with one another.

*Technician vs. Creator.* Finally we should mention the all too common split between the practical man of materials and tools — the man who is at home with taps and dies, cams and gears, and the tempering of steel — and the sensitive, visionary individual whose task it is to devise imaginary constructions. These men must get together and work together if their common work is to be successful. This can be done only if each succeeds in respecting the importance of the other, and in knowing all that he can of the other's problems. Their relationship is, in this respect, like that of any two people — husband and wife, partners in business, teacher and pupil — whose tasks are complementary. Nothing is to be gained, and all is



to be lost, by attitudes of ignorance and contempt. Co-operation blossoms when each accepts the discipline of reality.

#### V. HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL BALANCE

Those who are concerned with the study of artifacts produced by ancient or foreign cultures may find the following distinction useful. Formal and material causes are referred to as *intrinsic* because they are actually in the object which owes its existence to their co-operation. The intuitive intellect recognizes the formal cause, and the senses recognize the material cause. Because these two causes are in the object, they may be studied whenever it is present. Means and ends, however, although they too have caused the artifact to come into being, are no longer actually to be found in it, and are therefore known together as *extrinsic* causes.

To know as much as possible about a strange artifact, therefore, the student must look in two different directions for his information. To learn about its pattern or its chemistry he must look at the thing itself, but to learn about the way it was produced, or about the good it was ordained to achieve, he must study the culture from which it came. Taking the Greek amphora which is illustrated on page 104 as an example, the baked clay, and the formal properties of the shape and painted decoration can be investigated, for they are there, but why such a shape was ever chosen, and what it has to do with the figures, and by what means the clay was shaped and fired, he cannot know without the aid of archeology and craftsmanship.

So we consult an archeologist, a Hellenist, and he tells us first that Attic amphorae were of two kinds: large ones coming to a point at the bottom, and smaller ones which were supplied with a round foot (as in the illustration). The large ones were carried by two men each holding a handle. The pointed bottom made it possible to stand the amphora up firmly on the rough, soft surface of the field. Such

a shape made these large vessels suitable for the gathering of the harvest.

The smaller amphorae were similar, but were fitted with a disc-like foot, as they were used for storage in buildings with hard floors, or as ritual vases in tombs. The decoration usually referred to the fate of human souls after death, as the analogies of life and death with seeds and with men were commonplace to the Greek mind. The decoration of the illustrated example is typical. Triptolemos, the culture hero who was fabled to have made the first plow, yoked the first pair of oxen, and to have flown through the air in a chariot drawn by winged serpents, bringing the gift of grain to the peoples of the world and thus making cities and civilization possible, Triptolemos sits in his car at the center holding ears of barley. Flanking him are two female figures, said to represent Demeter, the mother goddess of the earth, the principle of all fertility, and her daughter Persephone, who is the personification of the grain itself. The three figures together, through the implied relationship between sowing and harvest on the one hand and human life and death on the other, bind together the present and the after-worlds, and give to the mundane business of getting daily bread its traditional religious signification.

If we had time to listen to him the archeologist would tell us all this and much more, but we still have technical facts to learn. The other extrinsic cause needs elucidation. How was this vessel made? Was it built up in spirals, or thrown on a wheel? If on a wheel, was it thrown in one piece or in sections? How were they fitted together? How were the glazes applied? And so forth. Such questions can be answered only by a potter who works at his trade in the traditional manner, which has remained practically unchanged over the centuries. As a knowing craftsman he looks at the artifact with eyes that understand the technical meaning of many slight variations in the form which the



layman would overlook. Thus he recognizes the sections which were thrown on the wheel, he perceives — among many other things — the marks of the tool which turned the leather-hard clay to its exact shape, and even the slight indentations of the stylus, made when the painter first sketched the decoration.

Neither the ancient harvester nor the ancient potter, the patron and the artist, are any longer here to answer our questions. Proper understanding of this vase, as of any foreign artifact, necessitates the co-operation of the man who studies the thing itself with experts who can enlighten him regarding the needs it originally served and the artistic means employed in its production. Without such co-operation, conclusions regarding such an object can claim no comprehensiveness or reality.

## VI. CONCLUSION

During the studies into the nature of artistic causality on which these three papers are a kind of report, we have gradually come to take an enlarged and enriched view of causality itself. At the beginning we conceived of the causes as four distinct entities, separated from each other by the strictness of their definitions. These definitions were a necessary starting point, and nothing can shake their authority, but as we learned more and more, the complexity of the causal relationships forced itself upon us.

Since we were concerned with the practical level of human production, rather than with the loftier one of metaphysics, we were able to feel some of the security

of the laboratory scientist when we came to formulating conclusions. Our theories were constantly subjected to the discipline of facts, and we felt that we had reason to believe that our "wheel" truly reflected certain realities concerning man's dealings with his environment. But our formulations were not simple. As Mr. C. S. Lewis has written in another connection (*Mere Christianity*, p. 129) "We cannot compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing. . . . How could we? We are dealing with fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about."

We have finally come to regard causality less as a partnership of four separate factors, than as a unity, having certain resemblances to an organism. It has the organism's great complexity in the relationship of its elements. It shows in its plan the effects of a basic number, as organisms do — *five* for the roses, *four* for the dogwoods, *three* for the lilies, and *two* for the vertebrates, this number in the case of causality being *four*. And it shows another organic resemblance in its cyclical movement or rotation.

It is our hope that what we have written will be studied by others, its errors corrected and its truths further developed and elucidated. In view of its importance, the serious investigation which the subject of artifice as a whole has received is negligible. We believe that a methodical and serious study of this field is long overdue, and offer the preceding pages as an introduction to a fuller examination of this department of reality.

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*Beloved children, crown your artistic ideals with those of religion, which revitalize and integrate them. The artist is, of himself, a privileged person among men, but the Christian artist is, in a certain sense, a chosen one, because it is proper to those chosen to contemplate, to enjoy and to express God's perfections. Seek God here below in nature and in man, but above all within yourselves. Do not vainly try to give the human without the divine, nor nature without its Creator. Harmonize instead the finite with the infinite, the temporal with the eternal, man with God, and thus you will give the truth of art and the true art.*

Pope Pius XII, April 8, 1952





## PRAYER BEFORE MUSIC

*By Sister Madeleva*

*O Holy Spirit, come;  
Rest on these inarticulate hands and dumb!*

*Be fire  
For my elate desire.*

*Be wind  
To quicken the still music of my mind.*

*Be the heard  
Utter, ineffable word.*

*Teach, Holy One, with Your love's art  
My hands, my heart.*

*Yours be the tongue  
In which the songs of my desire are sung.*

## ETHOS IN MUSIC

*To those of us who are familiar with "pure" music, e.g., the sonata and the symphony of today, Miss Thurston's thesis may present a distinct challenge. Drawing upon representative writings from other ages and distant parts, she shows that music, under normal conditions, has been almost invariably orientated toward some idea outside music — without any consequent restrictions upon it as a work of art.*

*By Ethel Thurston*

It was Dr. George Shuster who reminded us that in the 19th century the rising Catholic revival and the rising romantic movement failed to co-operate sufficiently with one another. And so they failed to contribute much needed elements to one another. By the end of the century, the aesthetes were worshipping at the shrine of Bayreuth, at the same time that the driest and most indigestible catechisms were used.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it is for some of the same reasons that music, the most romantic of the

arts, plays such a small part in the apostolate today; that in spite of the noble efforts of so many, there is still a hiatus in thought between the people who have mastered the technique and craft of music, and those who work in other branches of the apostolate.

Many of my fellow professional musicians accept as an axiom that music is an end in itself. They usually consider, for instance, that the sacred music of the Middle Ages, used for a higher end (with the necessary restrictions for this) was "shackled by the Church"; that the art did



not really begin until it was freed in the Renaissance. Others go even further and take for granted that the only end of music is to give pleasure.

It is unfortunate that one can rarely turn for wisdom in this matter to the contemporary Church, even though study of the Catholic tradition can rectify these misconceptions. But if a musician attends a Catholic church in contemporary America — unless he attends an exceptional church — he is almost sure to hear one of two things: either saccharine hymns accompanied by unspeakable organ music, or else unloved Gregorian chant, mechanically sung, its beauty reduced to "corniness" by the addition of 19th century chords — usually loud ones. So most of the Catholic musicians that I know reconcile themselves to a life in the Church painfully divided from the standards of their craft. They often just give up and attend Low Mass.

Many people wish to remedy this situation — so many that I am sure it *will* be remedied. But it is still difficult to interest good musicians in the movement. The first reason is that many do not fully appreciate the greatness of music used for a higher end. Another reason: those who would persuade them are not well enough prepared to do so. They do not understand music well enough to have real respect for it as an art. It is sometimes even spoken of as if it were a kind of propaganda. And then the better musicians sometimes hesitate, for professional reasons, to become associated with any work in the pursuit of which such low standards are set for their craft.

In the meantime, I would like to produce evidence that, in other ages and other places, this situation has not always existed. In other ages and places there has been music loved by large elements of the population, even music of "entertainment value" which has been great art and which has been dedicated to the highest ends. One reason why this could be, is that music outside western European civiliza-

tion is simpler. It has melodies but no chords, though the melodies have tremendous variety.

And the other reason: this music is almost invariably orientated toward some idea outside music, usually the supernatural: God or the gods, the muses, ethics or even magic. Pure music, with no words, ideas outside music, or even a title, such as the sonata or symphony of today, is the exception. It is most significant that, although music is restricted to conform to this orientation, it is never restricted in such a way as to make it less an art, less beautiful.

#### MUSIC AMONG THE GREEKS

The extra-musical orientation best known today is that of ancient Greece. *Ethos* was the famous term which designated the emotional and ethical character of the different kinds of tunes. Because there are many well preserved systematized treatises on this subject, we can analyze fairly well how the Greeks dedicated their music towards higher ends. In the following passages Plato and Aristotle discuss the ethical effects of different rhythms and modes.<sup>2</sup>

And is it not for this reason . . . that education in music is most sovereign, because more than anything else, rhythm and mode (harmonia) find their way to the innermost soul and take the strongest hold upon it? . . . Omissions and failure of beauty in things badly made or grown, would be most quickly perceived by one who was properly educated in music, and so feeling distaste rightly, he would praise beautiful things and take delight in them, and receive them into his soul to foster its growth, and become himself beautiful and good.<sup>3</sup>

For the modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling the most fundamental political and social conventions.<sup>4</sup>

Why is hearing the only perception which affects moral character? Is it because sound alone has movement, though not of course the movement which it produces in us? This movement has a semblance of moral character, both by the time and by the arrangement of higher and lower sounds. . . . This character does not exist in other perceptibles.



But the movements with which we are dealing are connected with action, and actions are symptoms of moral character.<sup>5</sup>

And moreover everybody when listening to imitations<sup>6</sup> is thrown into a corresponding state of feeling by the rhythms and tunes themselves even apart from the words. . . . Rhythms and melodies contain representations of anger and mildness, and also courage and temperance, and all their opposites . . . that mostly correspond to the true natures of these qualities. . . . When we listen to such representations, we change in our soul. . . . Pieces of music . . . do actually contain in themselves imitations of character, for even in the nature of mere melodies, there are differences, so that people when hearing them are affected differently. . . .<sup>7</sup>

It can be seen particularly in the first of these passages that music ordained to be ethically good, must not be restricted in such a way as to be less an art. As an art it must be all the more perfect, if it is to accomplish its end of teaching the listeners to perceive more readily and take delight in things which are beautiful.

Also it must be understood that music usually had words, or if not, was "about something." The people of this age were a classic logic-minded people who did not like the vagueness of a melody with no words or ideas to give it distinct meaning. It is only during the last two hundred years that people have formed a taste for abstract music. The present quantity of pure music may be an important factor in making the best music difficult for the non-musician to perform or hear.

However, aside from everything that words or ideas conveyed, Aristotle particularly says that "even in the nature of mere melodies, there are differences." Elaborate technical reasons were given for this. Ptolemy goes further into the matter.

The same melody has an activating effect in the higher keys, and a depressing effect in the lower keys, because a high pitch stretches the soul, while a low pitch slackens it.<sup>8</sup>

This and similar statements have confused modern scholars, and it is only recently that a plausible explanation has been

found.<sup>9</sup> The Greek musical system had a middle note, called the *thetic mese*. The listener was always in some way aware of this note, consciously or otherwise. This is hard for people to imagine, as there is no such note in music today.

For all the best tunes make frequent use of the *mese*, and all good musicians employ it frequently, and quickly revert to it, even if they leave it, but not to any other note to the same extent . . . the *mese* is a kind of conjunction in good music because its note most often underlies the tune.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, each separate scale or mode, had its own *mese*, the *dynamic mese*. There were over eight separate scales. This is another difficulty for people today as we are accustomed to only two, the major scale and the minor scale. Music in the major scale has quite a different personality from that in the minor. In Greece (as in Gregorian chant) there were over eight such different personalities. Each of these separate scales had, besides its separate personality, its own *mese*. This *dynamic mese* might coincide with the *thetic mese*, as in the Dorian mode. This explains why Aristotle and others always refer to the Dorian mode as having the "greatest composure."

But the *dynamic mese* in the Phrygian mode is higher than the *thetic mese*. And so the listener was aware of both the usual middle note, and a higher note. According to Ptolemy, this high pitch "stretches the soul." This is one reason why Aristotle says that the Phrygian mode "makes men enthusiastic."

The *dynamic mese* in the Hypodorian mode is very low. So one of the listener's centers of balance is a low note. This produced what Ptolemy referred to as slackening of the soul. Most writers characterize this mode as depressing. This is an impossible thing for us to imagine in terms of sound. It would take years of ear training in Greek melodies, provided there were enough, to begin. What it implies is that Greek music had a clearly perceived musi-



cal space. Our own musical space is vague and shapeless.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the recent twelve tone system, although it has no central note, has the whole chromatic scale, arranged in a particular order which is followed throughout the piece.

Besides the words, the ideas and the *mesai*, other elements affected the ethical quality of ancient Greek music. An important one was the size of the steps between the various notes. Here again there is a difference between music of the last two hundred years and almost all other music. Recent music has what is known as equal temperament, that is, between each of the twelve half steps of the scale, the distance is exactly the same. This is necessary if chords or harmony are to be used extensively. But outside recent European civilization, chords are not used, and it is no more necessary for a musician to make the distance between the notes exactly uniform, than it is for a painter to paint the right hand exactly the same size as the left. The Greeks, in particular, used an almost infinite variety of distances between the different notes. Aristoxenos says:

One must understand that the number of *lichanoi* (third note from the bottom of the scale) is unlimited; you can place a *lichanoid* at any distance from the preceding note.<sup>11</sup>

When one first listens to such untempered music, as is most oriental music, it sounds out of tune. Then one's ear gradually becomes accustomed and it begins to sound mysteriously right. It is perfectly suited to the music in which it is written.

Other aspects of music affecting the *ethos* were its speed, notes purposely used frequently, certain notes purposely omitted, the arrangement of the combinations of large or small steps, and certain recurring turns of melody.

Most of the extant pieces of ancient Greek music are transcribed in M. Emmanuel's article in *Encyclopedie de Musique*, Vol. 1. They are well worth reading. The

music is warm, colorful, dignified, and completely different from any other music. A choir trained in Gregorian chant can sing them fairly well. It would be a valuable work if such a choir would make a record album of them, since, to my knowledge, there are no records by singers who understand anything of Greek thought.

Thus almost all of music, if we except the one period with which we are most familiar, from about 1500 to the present, is much less divorced from the rest of life. This divorce came in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, when counterpoint (more than one melody at once) and later, harmony (chords) became the usual way of writing. This style provided, as well as required, a fascinating study of one sound in relation to another. As a result there was disregard for words and meaning. It was difficult, particularly at first, to adjust the music both to the inner laws of counterpoint as well as to the relation of music and ideas. To this day, the training of a composer consists of years of detailed study of one sound in relation to another in pure music (no words or title). Very little or no time in this program is given to relation of music to words or thoughts, and that little mostly concerns word accents.

#### MUSIC IN THE ORIENT

The extra-musical connotations are even stronger in China than in ancient Greece. Here are some passages from *Li Chi*, The Book of Rites of the Confucianist School:

When man is born, he is serene; this is the nature of heaven. . . . If man cannot regulate his likes and dislikes, the outer things will lead him astray . . . and the heavenly nature in him disappears. . . . For this reason the kings of olden times instituted rites and music in order to regulate human emotions.<sup>12</sup>

In music the holy sages took delight, because music can improve the heart of the people. Music has a profound influence on man; it can improve customs and ameliorate morals.<sup>13</sup>

Occasionally when the government is decaying . . . there will arise tones not conforming with these high musical principles. . . . These incite people to depravity, confuse the proper



relations between men and women, ruler and subject, and sap the foundations of the state.<sup>14</sup> In performing, because of this deep meaning of music, stress should not be laid on superficial beauty of melody and specious notes; above all, the spiritual, the transcendental significance of music must be made manifest.<sup>15</sup>

The following is from a Chinese book of music from the 15th century:

A melody describing winter and the coming of spring composed by T'sai Yung. This tune takes its inspiration from the snow; it describes its purity and freedom from all earthly stains; it expresses contempt for the world and elevation to empty clearness.<sup>16</sup>

The following is from a book of music from the 16th century:

*The Mystic Journey.* The etherial tones of the lute loosen the soul of the player from its earthly bonds, and enable him to travel to the mystic heights where the immortals dwell, and be initiated into the secrets of the elixir of life. Sub-title: *Travelling to the Palace of Wide Coolness (the Moon).*<sup>17</sup>

The means of achieving the extra-musical ideals involve, as in Greek music, a certain amount of technical knowledge. The means, in general, are the same in all music which has *ethos* or the equivalent. They include regulation of the size of the steps, notes used frequently, notes purposely omitted, the arrangement of certain combinations, recurring turns of melody. Only the matter of the *mesai* is found in Greece alone. In China the material on which the music is performed is of significance, whether it be stone, as in the temple stone chimes, or reed, as with the flute. Orchestras were particularly made up to include all the important elements of the earth.

East Indian music has the equivalent of *ethos*, and is usually the easiest of all eastern music for an occidental to understand. The following are passages about music, some of recent date, others of earlier but uncertain date.

From the earliest times we find that music was regarded as sacred. Millions of musicians . . . flourished in the land, and multitudes of professionals were supported by the

state, free from all imposition. Their one object in life was to unravel the secret mysteries and expound the hidden doctrines of the sacred art.<sup>18</sup>

What we call our life is unco-ordinated and far from the harmony of art. . . . It is otherwise with the gods whose every gesture immediately reflects the affections of the inner life. Art is an imitation of that perfect spontaneity, the identity of intuition and expression in those who are of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>19</sup>

This Indian music is essentially impersonal: it reflects an emotion and an experience which are deeper and wider and older than the emotion of any single individual. Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exaltation, and it is passionate without any loss of serenity. It is in the deepest sense of the words all-human.<sup>20</sup>

The *ethos* of Indian music depends upon the *raga* in which it is played. A *raga* is not a scale. It is the ground plan of the piece, having its own scale, its mood, a dominant pattern of melody, with its own starting note. Every *raga* is associated with a particular hour of the day, and it is not good form to play in it at another time. Some are associated with the seasons, with fire, water, rain and so forth. Here is a *raga* Megh.

This has come out of the fifth head of Mahadeo, which is turned heavenwards. The months in which it should be played are July and August. It is the lord of rain. It charms the elements of water in nature, and acts as a spell to bring forth torrents of rain flooding the country. It may be played at all times in the rainy season. Megh is represented as a dark handsome man of formidable appearance.<sup>21</sup>

The power which a *raga* is believed to have is mirrored in this legend about the *raga* fire. Similar legends exist all over the orient.

The end of Narkgopal, one of the mightiest singers the world has produced, was most tragic. Emperor Akbar in one of his moods insisted on his singing the *raga* Deepak. The celebrated singer had at this stage attained that high perfection that he would not sing a song without stirring the forces of nature. . . . He placed himself in the Juma and began his song. The water began to heat, and soon



began to boil. . . . In the agony of his sufferings he burst forth . . . and sang with such power that the element of fire was excited in nature, and each note turned to flame, and his whole person exhaled fire and slowly consumed his body.<sup>22</sup>

According to the *Ramayana*, the great national epos of unknown date, music played an important part in the everyday lives of people of all classes. This can be seen from the quantities of musical metaphors. Though considered for the highest purpose, music has also great power of entertainment.

#### MUSIC AMONG THE HEBREWS

Although it was transmitted only by memory, ancient Hebrew music is the oldest extant. Abraham Idelsohn has been able to prove the accuracy of some of this transmission by memory alone. He has found identical melodies in remote Jewish congregations in Yemen, Babylonia, and Persia, all of which have been separated from Palestine and the further development of Jewish ritual after the destruction of the first temple in 591 B.C. Hence, these melodies must have existed in the home land before 600 B.C.<sup>23</sup> Music with many instruments was used, as the following passages from the Old Testament show.

And David spoke to the chiefs of the Levites to appoint some of their brethren to be singers with musical instruments, to wit on psalteries and harps and cymbals that the joyful noise might resound on high.<sup>24</sup>

Both the Levites . . . clothed with fine linen, sounded with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, standing on the east side of the altar, and with them a hundred and twenty priests, sounding with trumpets.<sup>25</sup>

The voice of Jehovah was a number of times associated with the *shofar*, a trumpet.

And now the third day was come, and the morning appeared. And behold the thunders began to be heard, and the lightning to flash, and a very thick cloud to cover the mount, and the noise of the trumpet (*shofar*) sounded exceedingly loud: and the people that was in the camp feared. And when Moses had brought them forth to meet God from the place of the camp, they stood at the bottom of the mount.<sup>26</sup>

And the Lord God shall be seen over them and His dart shall go forth as lightning: and the Lord God will sound the shofar, and go in the whirlwind of the south.<sup>27</sup>

The writings of the effects of music have but slight magical connotations.

David took his harp and played it with his hand; and Saul was refreshed, and was better, for the evil spirit departed from him.<sup>28</sup>

So I say that there are eight melodies and to all and each are measures derived from the intoning. . . . The first two melodies move the strength (of the humor) of the blood and the temperament of sovereignty and dominion. . . .

And the third . . . melody alone moves (the humor of) the yellow bile and the (temperament of) courage and audacity and what is like them.<sup>29</sup>

The above passage refers to different patterns of rhythm and the various bodily humors or temperaments which they arouse.

#### MUSIC AMONG THE ROMANS

With regard to Roman music, much less is known than in the case of the others. Little information and no fragment of music has survived. During the early periods (*c.* 639 B. C. and before) the music of Rome was distinct from that of Greece.<sup>30</sup> Later, still B. C., the Sibylline Books fostered the "*Ritus Graecus*" and the *Societas cantorum graecorum* was founded at Rome.<sup>31</sup> From then until the time of Boethius (*c.* 480-524 A.D.) Greek instruments were used, and thinking was in terms of Greek theory.

The main sources of information for the period before Christianity are in the writings of Cicero.

Nothing so easily makes its way into youthful and yielding minds as the various notes of song, of which it scarcely can be told how great is their power both for good and for evil. For it stimulates the listless and calms the excited; now it releases, now it restrains men's spirits. For many Greek states to preserve their ancient type of tunes once was a matter of importance; but when their songs had become effeminate, their characters degenerated and likewise there were changes to effeminacy, either because they were depraved by this sweet corruption, as some



suppose, or because when their strict pattern of life had collapsed because of other vices, in their changed ears and hearts there was place also for this alteration. For this reason indeed the wisest and by far the most learned man of Greece (Cicero is referring to Plato) exceedingly feared this catastrophe, for he denies that the laws of music can be changed without change of the public laws. I, however, consider that this change should neither be dreaded so greatly nor be entirely disdained; yet I observe that those who were wont once to be satisfied with the agreeable strictness of the tunes of Livius (Andronicus) and Naevius, now jump up and turn their necks and eyes in time with the modulation of modern measures.<sup>32</sup>

Cicero, Martianus Capella, Seneca, and other writers mention the excessive use, showiness, and impropriety of the music of their day, as compared with that of earlier times. Lyres are described as large as sedan chairs, orchestras that outnumbered the audience, capricious intriguing prima donnas, a state of things not too unlike that of the late 19th century.

#### MUSIC IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND MIDDLE AGES

It was at this time that Christianity entered the scene. Again there is very little information. During the early centuries, A. D., the only surviving manuscript of Christian music is the third century "Oxyrhynchus Hymn" from Egypt.<sup>33</sup> The only other extant music was written down several hundred years later, though some of it may have been just as early as this hymn.<sup>34</sup> Music during the first five centuries underwent a complex and obscure change.

The most important sources of knowledge for *ethos* or its equivalent are in the writings of the Church Fathers. Many of these were educated in the arts, and were familiar with Greek theoretical writings of earlier and contemporary times. Unfortunately they made no technical analyses, so there is no discussion of the *mese*. This does not mean that it did not continue to play a part in music. However, there were speculations of other kinds, often lengthy.

We can gather from these how a highly developed and noble pagan art (even in a less good period) can be adapted to take its place in Christian life and thought. The early saints shared the pagan beliefs in the power of music to affect man. These beliefs needed to change only slightly under the influence of Christian philosophy. They were, of course, shorn of magical connotations.

There were contemporary pagan speculations with regard to music and the



cosmos. The Pythagorean school had made a complicated study of these in relation to mathematics. There were speculations on allegorical and mystical numbers in their relation to music. Numbers of musical significance were thought to influence the movements of the stars and the movements of the soul. These ideas were accepted, in part, by Christian writers. The aspects involving sorcery were left out and they were developed by St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-220), St. Methodius (martyred in 311), St. Basil (229-279), St. Ambrose and St. Augustine.

Behold the might of the New Song. . . It . . . composed the universe into melodious order, and tuned the discord of the elements to harmonious arrangement. . . . The violence of fire it has softened by the atmosphere, as the Dorian is blended with the Lydian mode; and the harsh cold of the air it has moderated by the embrace of fire, harmoniously arranging these extreme tones of the universe . . . not according to Thracian music . . . but according to the paternal counsel of God which fired the zeal of David. . . .<sup>35</sup>

Aristotle, quoted earlier, considered that

music contained in some way, reproductions of the states of the soul. Some of the eastern Fathers as well as St. Augustine agreed with this.

I observe that all the varying emotions of my spirit have modes proper to them in voice and song, whereby, by some secret affinity, they are made more alive.<sup>36</sup>

There is objection to chromatic music, or music with extra tones extraneous to the diatonic or regular scale. As the word suggests, this music is more highly colored. It may be that it was customarily associated with immoral subject matter, and with music which corresponds to the modern burlesque. Or it may have been the taste of the times to prefer music without this high coloring.

For temperate modes are to be admitted, but we are to banish as far as possible from our robust mind those liquid modes, which through pernicious arts in the modulations of tones, train to effeminacy and scurrility. But grave and modest strains say farewell to the turbulence of drunkenness. Chromatic modes are therefore to be abandoned to immodest revels and to florid and meretricious music.<sup>37</sup>

Chromatics really appear to have been restricted, and did not appear again until the late Renaissance. In the last few centuries, chromatic music has not been thought to suggest erotic or secular things. It has been used in sacred music not all of which is in secular or over florid style. Fauré's *Requiem* is an exceptionally spiritual work, and a very chromatic passage in it suggests the transformation of the soul in purgatory. It is difficult to understand fully what the associations were so many centuries ago. For instance, the gardens of that period were often associated with the erotic statues around which they were planned. Today, gardens have a completely different connotation. It may be the same with chromatic music. Or again, it may be that the early saints were more sensitive, penetrating and unspoiled in their reactions than we are, not only because of their sanctity, but because of surroundings less artistically spoiled than ours.

Another interesting matter was the use of musical instruments. For several reasons they were considered unsuitable for the praise of God. They were used so much in stage performances, and were intimately associated with paganism.

Let the fistula be resigned to shepherds, and the aulos to the superstitious who are engrossed in idolatry. For in truth, such instruments . . . (are) more suitable to . . . the more irrational part of mankind. . . . The one instrument of peace, the word alone by which we honor God, is what we employ. We no longer employ the ancient psaltery, and trumpet, and timbrel, and aulos which those (pagans) were wont to make use of . . . that by such strains they might raise their dejected minds.<sup>38</sup>

Instruments were excluded from the Byzantine chant in the council of Laodicea in 367. It is not possible to be certain of their use or disuse in Western chant. The organ, sometimes a sensitive soft instrument, sometimes a noisy outdoor instrument used in the arenas was not in favor for a long time.<sup>39</sup> It was first heard in church in Spain in the 4th century, and in other parts of Europe many centuries later.

But it was not only the pagan associations that account for the neglect of instruments. Most music was written to words, more than in the preceding Graeco-Roman periods or after that time. The people of this period were logic-minded, and liked the distinctness in their art which words convey. Like the 18th century French, they disliked wordless patterns of sound on instruments. "*Sonate, que veux-tu?*" (Sonata, what do you wish of me?)<sup>40</sup>

This is difficult for most of us to understand. Since the first centuries, A.D., music for instruments has increased, and wordless music with it. Even singing now adapts itself to the instrumental accompaniment. In the early centuries, accompaniment, if any, adapted itself and was subservient to the singing. It was usually not even written down.

The early saints rejected almost the same music that the great pagan writers found objectionable. It would appear to include



music with immoral subject matter, including much theatre music, and that which would correspond today to vaudeville and burlesque. A great deal of later Graeco-Roman music apparently fell into these categories. It is not possible to determine just how much was rejected.

For we must reject superfluous music which enervates men's souls, and leads to variety, now mournful, and then licentious and voluptuous, and then frenzied and frantic.<sup>41</sup>

For if people occupy their time with pipes and psalteries and chorus and dances and Egyptian clapping of hands and such disorderly frivolities, they become quite immodest and intractable. . . . For the various spells of the unbroken strains and plaintive numbers of the Carian muse corrupt men's morals, drawing to perturbation of mind by the licentious and mischievous art of music.<sup>42</sup>

This Sappho was a lewd lovesick female, and sings her own wantonness; but all our women are chaste, and the maidens at the distaff sing of divine things.<sup>43</sup>

It is not the custom in our present day for music to be rejected, as a rule, for reasons other than artistic ones, and for any learned or wise people other than the artists to do the judging. Freedom of expression is considered to be of great importance in creative work, and it is for this reason that many people have thought that the stand of the Fathers was narrow, and that it curbed and prevented expression. But it is not wise to judge people of another era, particularly such a distant one, without taking full account of the setting in which they operated. Unfortunately, this is almost impossible to do. Except for a few hymns, we are not able to hear the music contemporary with the Church Fathers. We do not know the various associations of these hymns, except that they were to Apollo, to Nemesis and to regional gods. With regard to the matter of preventing expression, we know that the great bodies of Eastern and Western chant which began and continued in these times, have great powers of expression, no less than in ages of freer expression. Those who are familiar with this music have usually found that it

is the most perfect to convey the Christian and spiritual ideal.

Then there is the matter of discipline in connection with all the arts. All of the great composers have had some kind of thorough and even relentless discipline in their work. But these disciplines have not always been the same. The exercises given by Bach to his students are not the same as those done today. But, ever since the days of part music, composers have made a very close study of the way in which one note sounds with various others, in all different speeds and combinations. Beethoven's notebooks have as many as fifteen versions of the same theme for a symphony or a sonata. He used only one. The rejection of the other fourteen did not curb his powers of expression, but clarified and heightened them. The discipline is no less in the present century, though there is more than one kind. The exponents of the twelve tone system have a rigid organization in their compositions that has been compared with that of Machault in the 14th century. The present day classical school places very great stress on technical and personal discipline, perhaps greater than that of the Church Fathers, but of another kind.

As we have seen, in the early Christian centuries, music was almost always "about something." So the discipline centered more around this "something" that music was about: the words, their meaning, the suitability of the music for them, their associations, their rhythm and accent. What the Fathers intended to reject was the infiltration of the secular, erotic and disorderly aspects of music which did not allow the mind to contemplate spiritual things. As a finished musical technique was easier to acquire, and as there was widespread love of music, it was possible for learned people who were not professional musicians to know enough of it to judge it well. In fact, such people were often composers of Gregorian and Ambrosian chant, though they did not write as much as was later credited to them. Nowadays this would

rarely be possible, because of the gulf between artists and non-artists. A learned non-musician rarely grasps enough of the technique, and even if he loves art, his love is not sufficiently matured. This accounts for much well-meaning dreary Gregorian chant, or Gregorian chant, if not dreary, without depth, or beauty, as immature as the chirping of birds.

Another way in which the early saints are misunderstood, is the failure to take into account whether the writer is addressing the general public, or a special group, such as a community or religious. Many of the writings are addressed to monks, and are not intended to apply to others. The following passage is cited in a number of histories of music:

Woe is upon us, O son, for the days are come in which monks shall relinquish the wholesome food given us by the Holy Ghost, and seek after words and tunes. What repentance, what tears proceed from hymns?<sup>44</sup>

It may be that this writer is a narrow philistine. However, as he is the abbot of an Egyptian community, it is probable that he is addressing contemplatives. He may not consider music harmful for the general public; he may only be one of those who consider that music does not help in the contemplative life. It is not possible to understand the music or the ideals of this period, or of the Middle Ages without understanding something of the monastic, ascetic, and contemplative ideals.

Then there is the question which troubles many musicians. As can be seen in some of the quotations above, some of the early saints were unfriendly to secular music. And it is a fact that from this period, and from a large part of the Middle Ages, very little secular music has survived. A naïve person concludes that the influence of these saints was so strong as to hamper seriously the development of secular music—music of the people—for almost a thousand years.

It is unfortunate that there is not more evidence as to what did take place. How-

ever, two things must be taken into account. First, it is quite probable that very much of the secular music of this period was erotic. The quotations not only from the saints but from Cicero suggest this. And it is usually thought that many of the medieval secular musicians were culturally the descendants of the pagan Roman singers and dancers.

Second, it is true that very little written secular music has reached us. But what about secular or even sacred music of the centuries before Christ? There is just as little. The reason is that music was rarely written down, as it was largely improvised or done from memory. Even Gregorian and Byzantine chant in the first centuries was written not in a way to be clearly read, but with incomplete designations which served only as memory aids. These chants were finally written down because they were of particular importance to those who sang them. This is because they are a part of the sacred services. The secular musicians had no similar need to write down their music.

Learned men have discussed the criterion by which one can tell which music is ethically good. Plato had been insistent that music be not judged by pleasure alone. So were the early saints. This matter is discussed in the famous passage from St. Augustine's *Confessions*.

The pleasures of the ear did indeed draw me and hold me more tenaciously, but You have set me free. Yet still when I hear those airs in which Your words breathe life sung with suave and measured voice, I do, I admit, find a certain satisfaction . . . yet not such as to grip me too close, for I can depart when I will. Yet in that they are received into me along with the truths which give them life, such airs seek in my heart a place of no small honor. . . . I observe that all the varying emotions of my spirit have modes proper to them in voice and song, whereby by some secret affinity they are made more alive. It is not good that the mind should be enervated by this bodily pleasure. . . . Yet when I remember the tears I shed, moved by the songs of the Church in the early days of my new faith, and again when I see that I am moved not by



the singing, but by the things sung . . . I recognize once more the usefulness of this practice . . . that by the pleasure of the ear, the weaker minds may be aroused to a feeling of devotion. Yet whenever it happens that I am more moved by the singing than by the thing sung, I admit that I have grievously sinned.<sup>45</sup>

Because of the interest in "the thing sung" more than in the singing, the quality of the melodies was different. The melodies appeared to grow out of the words themselves. The early Christians continued a tradition already established by the ancients in carefully fitting the syllables and accents to the music so that the words would be heightened by the music. Thus, melodies did not "drown" the words as some melodies do in later music. The sensitiveness to accent and delicate treatment of meaning and atmosphere is unfamiliar to modern ears, and the ability to perceive and follow these, needs to be acquired.

#### *Ars Gratia Artis*

Many melodies formed associations with various parts of the Christian year, the saints, the different parts of the Mass and Office. These melodies had somewhat the same effect on people that Christmas carols now have, except that there were many more, and they covered a variety of phases of Christian life; they were not limited only to Christmas. They lasted through the Middle Ages and several hundred years beyond. In the 18th century there were still varieties of such melodies, though most of them were of later origin. The change came at the time that wordless orchestral music, including the symphony, became popular—in the late 18th and 19th centuries. There were, no doubt, spiritual causes for this as well as cultural ones.

But *ethos* began to become a lost art when counterpoint appeared in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. This style of writing gradually absorbed more and more of the best writers. The marvelous study of one sound in relation to another led to disregard of words, accent and

meaning. This was because it was difficult, especially at first, to adjust the music both to the inner laws of counterpoint and to the relation of music and ideas. Technically, music from the Renaissance through the 19th century is built on the foundations then established.

#### *Ars Gratia Dei*

During the last fifty years or more, there has been an attempt to return the arts to their proper service of God. It is natural that people should again be interested in the music that was sung in the ages of faith. Catholics are not alone in this, for, since the break-up of harmony at the end of the 19th century, musicians have searched among the different kinds of music which employ no harmony (or chords) at all: Gregorian chant, Byzantine chant, ancient Greek music and the various branches of Asiatic music. This has involved a vast amount of work, as it has taken three generations of scholars to be able to transcribe Gregorian chant accurately. The other bodies of ancient music have been transcribed in relatively small amounts, if at all.

The next step is to perform it, and here, the other bodies of ancient music have often fared better, though not always. It is a tremendous undertaking to revive music over a thousand years old and make it a part of life today. And in spite of heroic efforts, two things which seem unfortunate to me have come about. What are the two main differences between Gregorian chant and later music? Chant has no chords or other "voices," and it is not "pure music"—it is music "about something." And how do we sing it? We sing it with chords, and rehearse it in almost the same way as pure music is rehearsed. We do not begin with the meaning of the words, then their beautiful diction. We begin with a wordless voice exercise, and usually continue by singing the melody on *do re mi*. We know the *letter* but not the *spirit*. Many people say that a choir accustomed to chords cannot

sing alone. It takes hours of practice at first, but I believe it can be done.

I am sure that many of these things would be avoided if more musicians of the first order were concerned about this work. Of the composers and performers of the very first rank, extremely few work with Gregorian chant, even though many are Catholics, and many more sympathetic to Catholic ideals. Just one such person with some degree of influence in a school could set standards, and orientate a large number of people to professional standards. And, in return, the familiarity with Gregorian chant, and the philosophy associated with it, could be a very great aid in writing his compositions — those of his own age — in the service of God.



#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>George Shuster, *The Catholic Spirit in America*, New York, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>The word *mode* is translated from the word *harmonia*. It does not mean *harmony* in ancient Greek, though it was used with more than one meaning. In this article, it refers to *mode*, meaning a Greek scale, of which there were over eight, and in earlier times many more.

<sup>3</sup>Plato, *Republic*, III: 401D-E. The translations presented in this article, unless otherwise stated, are found in the *Loeb Classical Series*, Harvard University Press. Exceptions are musical terms which have been found to differ with this translation.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* IV:424C.

<sup>5</sup>Aristotle, *Problems*, XIX:27.

<sup>6</sup>Referring to dramatic music.

<sup>7</sup>Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII: 5:4-10.

<sup>8</sup>Ptolemy, *Harmonics*, II:7:58; III:7:98. In *Göteborgs Högskola Arsskrift*, 36 (1930), pp. 57-8, 99-100. Tr. by C. Sachs in *The Rise of Music*, p. 248. See also Aristotle's *Problems*, and Aristides Quintillianus, *De Musica libri*, III.

<sup>9</sup>Curt Sachs, *The Rise of Music*, pp. 216-247.

<sup>10</sup>Aristotle, *Problems*, XIX:20.

<sup>11</sup>Aristoxenos of Tarentum, *Harmonics*, tr. Henry Macran, 1902.

<sup>12</sup>Li Chi, *Book of Rites* (of the Confucianist school) tr. by R. H. van Gulik in *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, Tokyo, 1940. ch. 1, par. 2.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* ch. 2, par. 7.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.* ch. 2, par. 26.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.* ch. 1, par. 9.

<sup>16</sup>Chu Ch'uan *A Ming Handbook in Three Chapters*.

<sup>17</sup>*Taoist Tunes* compiled by Ku I Chiang.

<sup>18</sup>Atiya Begum Fyzee-Rahamin, *The Music of India*, London, 1925. pp. 10-11.

<sup>19</sup>Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Siva*, N. Y., 1924. p. 79. taken from the *Ramayana*, national epos of India.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>21</sup>A. B. Fyzee-Rahamin, *Op. cit.* p. 67.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.* p. 94-5.

<sup>23</sup>Abraham Idelsohn, *Jewish Music*, p. 27, and ch. III and IV.

<sup>24</sup>I *Chronicles* XV: 16.

<sup>25</sup>II *Chronicles* VI: 12.

<sup>26</sup>*Exodus* XIX: 16-17.

<sup>27</sup>*Zachariah* IX: 14-15.

<sup>28</sup>I *Samuel* XVI: 23.

<sup>29</sup>Sa 'adyah Gaon *Kitāb al amānāt* (written 933) tr. in H. G. Farmar, *Sa'adyah Gaon on the Influence of Music*, London, 1943.

<sup>30</sup>Curt Sachs. *Op. cit.* p. 272.

<sup>31</sup>R. Paribeni. "Cantores graeci nell' ultima secolo della reppublica in Roma" in *Aegyptus, Serie scientifica* III (1925).

<sup>32</sup>Cicero, *Laws*, II: 15: 38-39; III: 14: 32f. The references in this passage are to Plato's *Republic* III: 401D-402D; IV: 424B-425; and *Laws*, III: 700D-701A.

<sup>33</sup>Grenfell and Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchos Papyri*, XV, London, 1922, no. 1768. Hermann Abert in *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, IV, (1922) pp. 524-529. Theodore Reinach in *Rev. Musicale*, III, 9, p. 2f.

<sup>34</sup>Music written before 500 A.D. includes the *Te Deum* melody, and *Gloria XV* in the *Liber Usualis*. The *Liber Usualis* was compiled by the Benedictines of Solesmes, France and is based on about one hundred years of research. Some of this research has appeared in the *Paleographie musicale*. Also before 500 A.D. are the Christmas alleluias, some of the Ambrosian hymns, and the Ambrosian antiphon for the first Sunday in Advent.

<sup>35</sup>St. Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptikos*, I:5. In J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*, series graeca, 1844-55, VIII: 58C-59B. tr. by A. C. Coxe, *A Select Library of the Antenicene Fathers*, 1925, II, 172.

<sup>36</sup>*Confessions*, X:23. tr. by F. Sheed. The



word *mode* (modus) is used, but not in the precise technical sense of the earlier periods. This word (Gr. *harmonia*, Lat. *modus*) changed its meaning during the two thousand five hundred years of its use. It is not always possible to know the exact meaning in the different writers. By the time of St. Augustine, the meaning *modes of music* was probably just *kinds of music*.

<sup>37</sup>St. Clement of Alexandria, *Op. cit.* 115. in Migne PG, VIII: 54A. tr. in *Ante-Nicene*, II:171.

<sup>38</sup>St. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, II:4. in Migne PG, VIII: 459C. tr. in *Ante-Nicene*, II: 249.

<sup>39</sup>Willi Apel, "Early History of the Organ" in *Speculum*, vol. XXIII, no. 2, April, 1948, pp. 196-198.

<sup>40</sup>Wanda Landowska, *Music of the Past*, Paris, 1909.

<sup>41</sup>St. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromatum*, VI:II; in Migne PG: VIII: 312B. tr. in *Ante-Nicene*, II: 500-501.

<sup>42</sup>St. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, II:4. in Migne PG: VIII: 440B-C; 441A. tr. in *Ante-Nicene*, II: 248.

<sup>43</sup>Tatian the Assyrian, *Pro Hellenae*, XXXIII. in Migne PG:VI: 873C. tr. in *Ante-Nicene*, II: 79.

<sup>44</sup>Pambo, *Gerontikon*, in *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica*, ed. by M. Gerbert, 1784, vol. III, p. 3. Tr. by G. Reese in *Music in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1940.

<sup>45</sup>*Confessions*, X: 23. tr. by F. Sheed.

#### VICTROLA RECORDS

GREEK: *Ephitaph of Seikilos* (Decca 201561) by Hans J. Moser; *First Delphic Hymn to Apollo* (Victor 208962) by the Palestrina Choir; *Mesomedes' Hymn to the Sun* (Decca 201561); *Hymn to Kalliopeia* (MSS 54); Modern Greek on pipes in florid style: FLO GHERA TOU VOSCOU (Odeon GA 78R, GO 552).

EAST INDIAN: Uday Shan-kar and company (Victor M382-6; 14508-B red seal).

HEBREW: Mailamm Collection at the Music Library, 121 E. 58th St., New York. Also, Robert Lachmann Collection at Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

CHRISTIAN: *Ambrosian Chant* (Decca G20418-20420); *Gregorian Chant*, a large variety of records including: Album by Solesmes Abbey Choir (Victor M-87); Albums by St. Benoît du-Lac Choir and Albums by Pius X Choir (Victor); *Easter Alleluia* sung according to mensural notation, with vocal production more nearly like that of earlier times (*Anthologie Sonore*, vol. 4.).

## TEN YEARS AGO

from "Why Exhibit Works of Art," Volume VI, Number 3, 1943.

What is an Art Museum for? As the word "curator" implies, the most essential function of such a museum is to take care of works of art which are no longer in their original places or no longer used as was originally intended, and are therefore in danger of destruction. This care of works of art does not necessarily involve their exhibition.

If we ask, why should the protected works of art be exhibited to the public, the answer will be made, that this is to be done with an educational purpose. But before we ask, Education in or for what? a distinction must be made between the exhibition of the works of living artists and that of ancient or relatively ancient or exotic works of art. It is unnecessary for museums to exhibit the works of living artists which are not in imminent danger of destruction; or at least, if such works are exhibited, it should be clearly understood that the museum is really advertising the artist and acting on behalf of the art dealer whose business it is to find a market for the artist; the only difference being that it makes no profit. On the other hand, that a living artist should wish to be "hung" or "shown" in a museum can be only due to his need or his vanity. For things are made normally for certain purposes and certain places to which they are appropriate, and not simply "for exhibition."

Ananda Coomaraswamy

# ON NATURALISM & DERIVATISM

*Question: Why do C.A.Q. writers often object to naturalism in art and to work that is done in keeping with historic styles? If things in nature are beautiful, why not paint them as they are, and if the old styles are beautiful, why not continue to use them? After all, if there were not some good in naturalism and derivatism, people would not like them as well as they do.*

*By Graham Carey*

*Answer:* I believe that derivatism and naturalism are abnormal and imperfect kinds of art. They are abnormal because one element in the artistic process, the artist's drive to perfection in the artifact, is under-emphasized or wrongly directed. This is not to say that derivative and natural objects have no goodness or beauty, but that they lack the fullness of goodness and beauty which they *might* have.

As a typical example of derivatism, let us say that I love the Middle Ages and everything that reminds me of that great Age of Faith. I love Gothic architecture. When I come to build a house, therefore, it is natural that I should, if I can afford it, build myself a "Gothic" house. Such a house reminds me of what I love, and I take great pleasure in it. But for reasons obvious to students of architecture it will be necessarily an ugly house. I can get no pleasure in looking *at* it, but I can get pleasure if I let it help me to look at a beautiful image of the Middle Ages that I have in my mind.

A typical example of naturalism is the head of Anne Page on the obverse of the St. Gaudens silver dollar. Miss Page was obviously a young woman of great natural beauty, and the sculptor's portrait of her is skillful, but, nevertheless, the coin does not rank high among the beautiful coins of the world, because St. Gaudens was ignorant of numismatic techniques, and believed, with the majority of the art world of his day, that a skillful portrayal of a beautiful woman meant a beautiful portrait. He was careless of the nature of his

final material—silver—and the coin lacks perfection. But it allows us to enjoy a mental image of a beautiful person, and we easily confuse this pleasure with aesthetic pleasure.

The fact is that there are many ways of receiving pleasure from an object. A true aesthetic experience comes from the contact of the mind with the objective perfection of a thing. But if the object has the power of arousing pleasant associations, that is a nostalgic or romantic experience and the pleasure is not aesthetic. The experience of such subjective pleasure is quite independent of the perfection of the object that excites it. In his old age John Ruskin listened to the playing of "Home Sweet Home" and vowed it was the most beautiful music he had ever heard. I think we may reasonably doubt this. He may have enjoyed the music more than any he had ever heard, but this was probably because it evoked in him happy memories rather than because of its musical perfection.

On a somewhat higher musical level, Ignatz Paderewski, a patriotic Pole, hated the sound of the old Russian National Anthem. Millions of Russians doubtless loved it, and among them perhaps musicians as sensitive as Paderewski. But neither the Polish nor the Russian musicians would be giving an objective aesthetic judgment, but a subjective political one.

This is in no way a moral point. Though every problem has its moral side, I am not dealing with that side here. I merely repeat that no man can serve two masters. Derivatism and naturalism call for an artistic method that precludes perfection



in production. Perfection, the artist's end, precludes derivatism and naturalism. We have to decide which we want, for in the nature of things we can't have both. The

evoking of nostalgic pleasures may be, in certain cases, entirely justified, but if we vote for that, we vote against the greatest achievable degree of objective beauty.



## JUBILEE

*This month will see the publication of the first issue of Jubilee, a national picture magazine for a Catholic audience, owned by its subscribers and edited by Catholic laymen. Editorial offices are at 377 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, New York. Here, Mr. Reynolds, managing editor of Jubilee, describes the challenge which inspired the founding of the magazine and the convictions which the editors share.*

*By Robert L. Reynolds*

Three years ago, a group of young Catholic laymen began planning a new magazine for Catholics. Veterans of years of experience on such secular publications as *Time*, *Look* and *Parade*, they were drawn together by the conviction that there was a real need for a popular publication which would report the Church in all her beauty—her intellectual eminence, her hard work, her charity, her spirit of true peace.

They began with the conviction that the magazine should be primarily pictorial. They were further convinced that if the magazine made a real effort toward technical competence, toward a professional appearance and genuinely significant contents, it would find a wide acceptance among Catholics—and perhaps among non-Catholics as well.

I suppose all of us on *Jubilee* are conscious of the fact that our readers will inevitably compare us with *Life*, the best known and (despite its shortcomings) still the most worthwhile of the secular picture magazines. We have not made an effort toward either a slavish imitation or a fastidious avoidance of *Life's* success formula. One thing which any regular *Life* reader

must have observed, especially in recent years, is the magazine's use of a relatively large number of "serious" articles, in the best of which there is a distinct absence of any tendency to "write down" to its mass audience. *Jubilee's* editors share with *Life's* staff the conviction that the "average reader" has a great deal more intelligence—and a much wider range of interests—than he usually receives credit for.

Every Catholic, of course, is interested in a subject like "The Church and the Cold War," which we chose as the lead article in our first issue. But we tried to avoid making this feature a violent blast at Communist persecution of the Church. Instead, we asked the writer for a calm statement of the facts about persecution behind the Iron Curtain, coupled with a reasoned account of the effort on the part of Catholics to combat Communism in countries where they are still free to act.

There is not, perhaps, so immediate an interest in a saint like The Venerable Bede, whom we also profile in our initial issue. Yet Bede's life and writings are a vital part of the heritage of English-speaking Catholics, and making our readers conscious of the breadth of that heritage is part of *Jubilee's* aim.

*Jubilee's* staff sees the magazine's func-

tion as a reflection of the living, thinking, working Church, which is at once a spiritual and a temporal institution. Primarily interested in the salvation of men's souls, she still must exist and accomplish her work in a terribly secularized society. The major encyclicals of the recent popes bear strong testimony to the Church's increasing concern with the temporal conditions in which her people live. *Jubilee* would be failing its readers if it did not reflect this concern. That is why *Jubilee's* first issue, for example, while underscoring the timeless importance of the Ascension, profiles the contemporary fight for justice of Father John Corridan, "waterfront priest" of the New York docks.

One other aim behind *Jubilee's* conception is worth mentioning here: From the

first, *Jubilee* was designed to appeal primarily to the Catholic family. A monthly "Family Portrait" (in the first issue it's a French refinery worker and his family), plus frequent articles on child care and training will be regular features.

We will, of course, hope to make available to our readers some of the richness of Christian art. In our first issue we made a start in this direction by reproducing two 15th century religious paintings—one of them in full color—and a portfolio of woodcuts by a contemporary German artist. C.A.A. members may be interested to know that in an early issue we plan to present the work of Adé de Bethune. In the field of art especially, we look forward to the comments and suggestions of members of the Catholic Art Association.

## ON MODEST TASKS

*This article is translated from the November-December, 1952, issue of L' Art Sacré. The editors plan to devote their next issue to a further development of the same subject.*

*By the Rev. M. A. Couturier, O.P.*

By "modest tasks" we mean here simply those artistic jobs whose scope or importance is obviously limited. But, by the same token, we also intend to point out a certain *quality* inherent in such works—a spiritual quality issuing directly from the modesty in the hearts of the simple people who make such things and who are fitted for their tasks precisely by their modesty of heart.

Modest tasks, modest forms, modest Christian hearts, all three go together and they teach us a lesson. No matter how pure and simple they may be, even the most archaic small Doric temples are not modest. A certain modesty of things has come to life with the Gospel and is its witness. That is what matters to us.

*Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus*

*hominibus: Dominus prope est*—a modesty of the heart, a modesty of things in the nearness of God.

It is for us to rediscover—both among the products of the past and in today's modest works of art—a certain spirit of the form which comes from the heart, and in turn protects and soothes the Christian heart. Otherwise, why concern ourselves with these questions?

### THE MODESTY OF THE PAST

Look at the simple stone houses of some of our poorest French villages. By the soberness and dignity of their shapes they are related to the architectural masterpieces of their own time (and of all time). They belong to their family and their race.

The proportions, the volumes, the profiles of these humble farms and poor churches are like those of the noblest Cistercian abbeys. True, they possess neither



the perfection or the incomparable grandeur of the latter, but the state of grace is there, the same virtues, the same bearing.

An outstanding masterpiece built by a man of genius cannot help impressing even the most unconcerned people by the sobriety of its lines. No ostentation is there. It is simply great. But, what such gifted men built in severity and greatness, other men, on the farms, have also done modestly and cheerfully. And both express almost the same secret of the heart, a secret of integrity and upright reserve.

Those "other men" — when one examines more carefully the character of the modest works of the past, one is struck how wonderfully gifted they were. Strength was theirs, health, and a natural seriousness in humble, ordinary tasks. Judging by the shapes they seem to have preferred instinctively, one realizes how the men who carried out these modest jobs might hardly be taken seriously as "artists" today.\* Yet this is the "style" and these are the men whom we must at all costs rediscover in our towns and villages if we hope to return to our churches — through the modest works they so desperately need — a beginning of human and Christian truth.

#### MODESTY OR MEDIOCRITY

Because in *L'Art Sacré*, we have written that "great things belong to great men," some have concluded: "Very well; and to the moderately talented then, should go the modest tasks, the many many modest tasks. . . ."

But it's not so simple as all that. In fact it is nothing short of disastrous, for apparently, no less than forty thousand painters are living in France today, and they are generally out of work. Yes, one must add immediately: "True, to great

men, great things, *but* neither are the modest tasks for the mediocre . . . ."

All are agreed that nothing good, nothing even passable and especially *nothing modest* can ever proceed from mediocre talents. In fact *modesty* is the virtue least possessed by the mediocre.

Besides, in an age like ours, the fact is that all simple people of modest talents are in constant danger of falling into mediocrity. That is the real tragedy of our modest tasks! So, no matter how many and how pressing they are, they must still be taken away from mediocre artists who are, alas, equally countless and pressing.

The truth is that our day and age is even less qualified for the unassuming tasks than it is for the great ones. Outstanding men always manage somehow: even Daumier, Van Gogh or Soutine were able to give expression to their talent. But, we must remember, in every sphere, whatever is unpretentious is, for that very reason, fragile and helpless — always in the greatest danger is our simplicity or modesty of heart and the innocent gifts she fosters.

Of course in *L'Art Sacré* we have continuously distinguished art from morality and creative ability from good will. But such an interior disassociation, shall we say, such an independence in creative freedom, actually *works* only in exceptional cases, in men who are gifted in a manner so pure and effective as to assure their work's integrity in spite of their sometimes appalling personal distress of heart and life. But for ordinary, lesser men — men lacking this strength, men of modest talents — what they do is always intimately tied up with what they *are*; and so the character of their work depends much more upon their thoughts, desires and morals. Everything affects them. The very honesty of a modest work (as in folk art) is still the close counterpart of its maker's honesty of life.

Thus the fate of modest talents — whether primitive or already refined — is closely linked to their environment. And

\* The author here mentions "*le Douanier*" Rousseau and other simple people as examples in France today. In this country they might be compared, artistically, to Grandma Moses or George Lopez. (Cf. *C.A.Q.*, XIV, 4, p. 163; and XV, 1, p. 25.)

there is no denying that today this environment is nothing less than deplorable. In an atmosphere where values are gradually declining, modesty turns inevitably into mediocrity.

#### A FOURFOLD THREAT

It seems to me that the chief dangers to our modest artists can be brought under four heads:

1) *The Influence of the "Great Masters."* True, it has always existed, but, today, it seems to impose a style too proud and daring for the qualities of modesty and her candid initiatives not to get hopelessly lost therein. The natural greatness of the old abbeys could reach down to the farmer's modesty because of a homogeneous society and because, though it rose above the ordinary, it did so with no violent breaks. But the haughty, brittle grandeur of today's great Independents (the manner of Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Rouault, or Léger is not a modest style; it is a great men's style) cannot be a mode suited to the modesty of more humble artists; it makes their voice hard; they sing it off key, and soon it can no longer even be heard, lost in "imitations."

2) *Education, Art Classes and Art Schools.* Once and for all (and how many experiments have we not seen tried only to fail?) we have little hope for a renewal of Christian art from the academies of art in France. One is always disappointed in the end. Too bad . . . (I am sorry to say this, because it grieves me to hurt those men whose character and devotion to education I hold in real esteem) but nothing can ever really be expected from formal education. Perhaps its very principle is false. At any rate, the schools should all simply be closed. "What can be taught," says the Tao, "is not worth learning."

The values that should be kept alive in people's hearts and imaginations are precisely those of un-knowing, ingenuity, candor, modesty. It is not possible to keep them in any school nor perhaps even in any group. That's just the trouble with the

schools: they dissipate mysteries, they debunk miracles — or, alas, perhaps they organize them . . . In school one learns "how to draw" a face, a tree, an Annunciation. From then on, all is lost, as it was lost in the Garden where, to live, man was not to touch the Tree of Knowledge. And, once outside, the gate could no longer be found.

3) *To Specialize in "Religious Art."* As things are today, I think it is an error to specialize too narrowly. Life is one. In a world where the direction of life is no longer religious, whatever is most vital in the arts is naturally secular too. Thus, anyone who deliberately isolates himself from the broad current of art (now profane) runs a serious danger of limiting his artistic vitality; by narrowly individualizing his personal endowments, they soon run dry. Besides, anyone so isolated from the current of his fellow contemporary artists (from their research, problems, successes and continuous fresh attempts) is by that fact limited to a closed circle. And this closed circle of "religious clients" is unfortunately not a group of serious and true patrons but rather a clientèle suspicious of every sound renewal. What they look for in a work of religious art is precisely not art. And, though this is perfectly understandable, eventually it weakens the wearied artist into artistic anaemia. If he is but moderately gifted, he is increasingly tempted to repeat himself and never to question again what originally made his "style" and his success. And that is how our present *mannerism*, both artistic and spiritual, developed and became what is today the curse of Christian art, the vulgarity of shapes which all over the world follow its mediocrity.

4) *The Price of Commercialism.* We must be pitiless and without illusion on this score. If a modest artist is to preserve his modesty's priceless qualities and gifts, he can do so only by continuing to live his modest life — modest in a material sense. How can he at the same time become "a



success" and continue to produce his unassuming works? If he becomes a business success, he will no longer turn out his charming modest pieces, for, psychologically and materially, everything in his new life is contrary to modesty—his way of life and all the worries of commercial expansion with its merciless rhythm of markets, commissions and "production schedules."

That is why the only people whose modest talent can possibly escape mediocrity will be saved by their modesty of heart and simplicity of life. They will be simple, lowly people. Matisse and Picasso, if they even know their names, will seem to them to belong to a distant, fabled world. They will never have gone to art school. They will certainly never read *L'Art Sacré*. They will not be "specialists"; instead they'll probably have another job on the side. These are the men we must discover for the modest tasks of our churches.

#### MODEST TALENTS TODAY

Are such modest workmen as plentiful today as formerly? I'd like to say exactly what's on my mind. I think such men are a teeming multitude in towns and villages all over the country; but they are hidden by the carefree ignorance that protects their modesty. It seems to me that it is impossible for the wondrous endowments of our childhood to become entirely lost in us. Yes, I know, these gifts do get lost in due course, as rainfall on the sand. But I believe that in many people they remain as an underground life, rising to the surface at times in dreams, under the influence of drink, or released in some mental disorders—but on the other hand at times too, favorable circumstances (perhaps a chance encounter, or a taste for certain kinds of work or simply a love of hobbies) allow them to find a normal expression and to reveal the freshness of their sources. At any rate, I believe such men exist and we must simply keep our eyes open for them, because in the last analysis they are the best if not the only hope for the modest

needs of Christian art, in fact for the basic human conditions of any religious art.

Perhaps we fail to realize how far removed we are from a truly religious art. But unbelievers—and especially those "unbelievers" whose heart keeps a painful longing for the Church and who are wounded by all that seems unworthy of their obstinate respect and their disillusionment—they see it and sadly turn away. What they yearn to see is a Christian art pure and candid. Our "Exhibitions of Sacred Art" with their affectations of modernity and mysticism are more often than not a scandal to these sincere people. And after all, we must admit they are right. . . . If this candor and purity are definitely lost, then is it not better to have nothing at all?

#### FOR FEAR OF PROFANATION

I believe as a matter of fact that a more profound sense of the sacred would banish from both our life and our Christian cult most of the "art" we so enjoy accumulating.

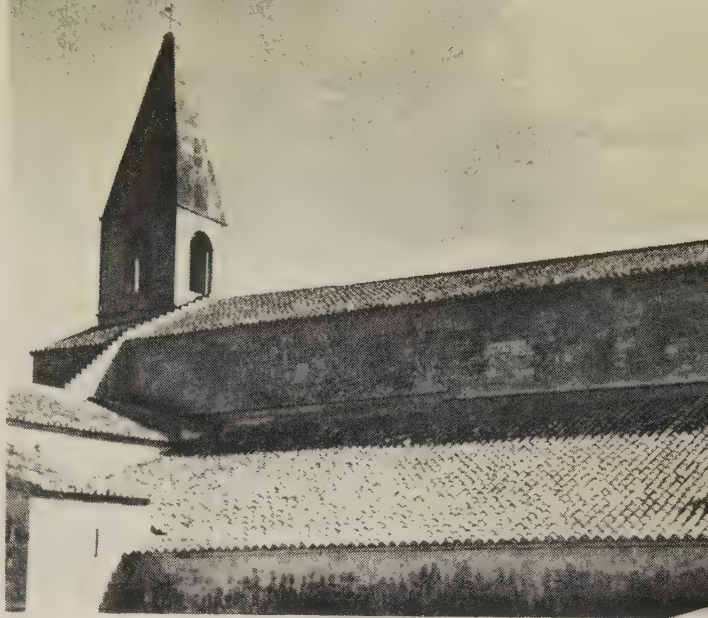
For a long time I have been struck by these early texts from *Genesis* and *Exodus*. "So it was that, when he rose in the morning, Jacob took the stone which had been his pillow, and set it up there as a monument, and poured oil upon it. . . . And there he took a vow: 'If God will be with me,' he said, 'and watch over me on this journey of mine . . . this stone which I have set up as a monument shall be called the house of God.'" (*Genesis* 28).

"It is enough to build me an altar of turf. . . . Even if thou shouldst make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stones; to use any tool in the making of it is to profane it." (*Exodus* 20)

There, indeed, are the beginnings of sacred art and the point is, no art is involved. These are realities—which by contract, by covenant, God and man are consecrating—which immediately become so sacred that they must hardly even be touched, as profane hands dare not touch a consecrated chalice.

We have lost the true sense of these things. Yet it seems as though today we

Study carefully these illustrations and the nobility of these poor buildings. This, in days gone by, is what came naturally from the hands and the hearts of the people. These are the things they made, the things they loved; but what of us today? Face to face with these things we would have to blind ourselves not to see that they raise a tremendous problem and that this problem is one of a moral and spiritual nature.



Le Thoronet

Château-Miral



Father Couturier believes that ordinary people's creative gifts are still alive today even under the armor plate of modern life. "There are some who manage somehow to preserve intact those inward treasures which in other times and civilizations flourished on all sides. We are convinced that an extensive and wonderful Middle Ages is still with us. It lies in the hearts of simple, humble people as a veritable treasury of inspiration—unfortunately weakened if not ruined by the distrust of unsympathetic relatives and even more so by the powerfully organized apparatus of art education which continues, generation after generation, and in spite of the criticism of our finest artists, to crush under its dead weight of half truths and stupidity, any effort in a sane direction."



may be recalled to this austere and primordial realism. We are dreadfully poor; poor in money and poor in artists on whom to found the serious hope that their work may be for us a spiritual profit. What is to keep us from returning to a more radical view of sacred things and of the Sacred itself? What, after all, do we *need absolutely* in a church? The altar, the cross, the tabernacle. . . .

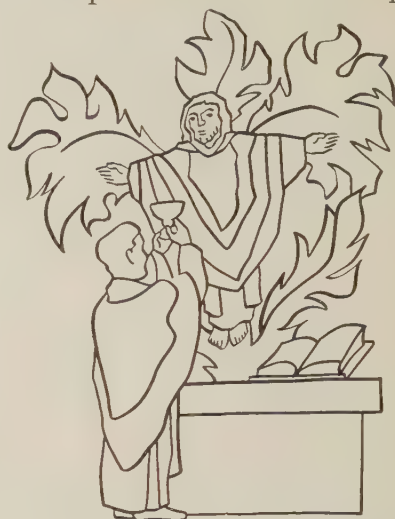
Why not, then, go to the local village wheelwright and order from him a sturdy wooden table, one of those noble, massive, low and long farm tables? Even today in our countryside, in out of the way places, the style of the wooden plows (the *arares* of my village), of the yokes, of the great farm carts and wagons, is still as firm and beautiful as that of any African sculpture.

Or if there is stone in your locality and if you prefer a tomb-altar, why not ask your stone cutter to shape a simple stone vault as for a burial and then celebrate Holy Mass on the slab? In either case, whether a table where one eats or a tomb for the dead, people would get the point at first sight. . . .

And if, at the worst, it turns out that the country craftsman has become completely extinct — then why not simply the Stone of Jacob and those stones of *Exodus* that the chisel dared not touch lest they be profaned?

Surely our fields or forests are not lacking in stones. We could haul some large, peaceful boulders into our churches, and leave them just as they are, with only the top roughly leveled for missal and chalice. Let the bishop consecrate them and let the people then surround these stones with a true respect, an authentic *cult*. *Petra erat Christus*. The sense of the Mystery and of the Sacred, the sense of the Presence and of the Incarnation of God in the world he created, would spread as a chain reaction and bring life to the liturgies, to the sources of imagination, to the depths of the human hearts. And we could start talking of art again a hundred years hence.

Nonsense, you say? Less than one might think. For almost half a century now, Boy Scouts have camped in the woods cutting boughs to build their altars for Holy Mass; and those boys and girls have certainly carved and painted altars. And the priest-



worker — he celebrates his Mass in the evening, in his rooming house, on the table where he will later have his supper, a few friends close to him. In concentration camps, priests in hiding have pronounced the words of consecration over a piece of bread, their hands gripped in their pockets. "Thus begins a Liturgical Movement," said Father Duployé.

And so, right under our eyes, we see the very best, the most living, the purest among us, return to the roots of things and away from the furbelows of the Renaissance.

If, however, we look at these questions from the other side — from the view point of the art world — we notice also a strange convergence: from the collages of Picasso and Braque around 1912 to the *art brut* of these last years, a path is also marked which brings us back circuitously to the Stone of Jacob.

With the world full of branches, boughs, stones, things of such pure shapes that they appear a living presence, mysterious, magical—what need have we to search for "artists" whose productions prove so powerless to hold us spellbound a single instant?

# BOOK REVIEW

## *Plants of the Bible*

MOLDENKE, HAROLD N. AND ALMA L.  
Waltham, Mass: The Chronica Botanica  
Company; New York City: Stechert-  
Hafner Company, 1952. 364 pp., illus-  
trated, \$7.50.

The title of this book might well have been *Plants and Plant Products from the Garden of Eden to the Atomic Age*. It seems that every possible legend, interpretation or bit of information concerning plants from *Acacia nilotica* through *Zostera marina* is presented to the reader.

The Moldenkes have produced an attractive work combining ancient wood engravings with modern head pieces, tail pieces and vignettes which are pleasingly scattered throughout the book. More than fifty plates are assembled at the end of the book. A bibliography of more than 600 titles is constantly referred to. Aids to the student include an alphabetically arranged table of contents, a general index, an index of Bible verses (King James Version), and chapters giving an historical sketch, supplementary notes and biblical verses containing references to unidentified plants.

This book will appeal to the scientist because scientific nomenclature is used throughout. The Hebrew, Greek and Latin forms from which the translations were made are parenthetically included, and the structure, origin, and present habitat are given. The general reader will find much interesting and informative material. For example, saffron which we now use to color mustard pickles, liquors or varnishes, formerly was used in medicine as a stimulant and antispasmodic, and in theaters, at weddings and on clothes as a perfume. Legends, myths and superstitions are re-

called. The Queen of Sheba is supposed to have refused to step on a cedar wood bridge because in a vision she saw the future cross of Christ which was made of cedar. Our beloved Rip Van Winkle had a prototype in an old rabbi who planted a carob tree. He was chaffed by the bystanders for the seeming uselessness of his act because the carob is a very slow growing tree and the rabbi was very old. He fell asleep, slept for seventy years, awoke and found a mature, fruit-bearing tree growing beside him. The myths include those relative to flax, myrtle, palm and poplar; superstition manifests itself in the popular beliefs concerning the lowly onion and the walnut.

*Plants of the Bible* is a noteworthy contribution to botanical literature. However, it is regrettable that a natural interpretation is so often forced to explain a supernatural fact. Why must Aaron's rod that blossomed be an almond that roots quickly "when placed in a glass of water in a warm place" (p.36)? Why must the God-given manna be "gummy exudations of certain desert trees" (p.126), gelatinous growths produced by species of *Nostoc* or lichens similar to reindeer moss? Why must the burning bush from which God spoke to Moses have been "the crimson-flowered mistletoe" or "the gasplant or fraxinella" (p.23)? Lastly, what historical evidence is there that the Bible was "copied and re-copied by lonely monks" (p.7)?

The Catholic reader may well object to the fact that the Douay and the Confraternity translations of the Bible are not given adequate recognition, and any Christian will object to the use of the word "legend" in reference to Adam and Eve and the Creation.

Sister M. Florentine, O.S.F.





## STUDENT SECTION

The arts are for everyone, and very specially for those who are in the process of preparing themselves by higher study for a healthy and a whole-ly Christian life. The strengthening influence and inspiration of the arts is not to be confined to the few who show a special aptitude for "artistic expression." *All* college students, seminarians, and novices have a virtual obligation to learn through contact and experience the place of the arts in the Christian life. There is an elevating and a purifying effect on the mental and spiritual outlook brought about by a familiarity with Christian art and art principles. While art students must above all be the champions of Christian art — upholding and practicing Christian art principles in all the activities of life — it devolves upon *all* Christians to avail themselves of the Christian culture afforded by a knowledge and understanding of the arts.

A recent panel discussion held at Villa Madonna College in Covington, Kentucky, considered the place of the arts in the Catholic college student's life. The following is one of the viewpoints given. It should be a thought for every student.

You young people are the potential leaders of tomorrow. You are demonstrating a healthy, energetic response to the challenge of tomorrow's leadership. You are to be congratulated on your decision to continue education in a College of Liberal Arts.

Villa (College) is happy to be located in a community where the hard work and savings of your parents and grandparents have built up a host of churches and schools. Many of your people have yearned for the opportunities you enjoy today. Thus it is reasonable to assume that they have not sent you to college to polish up useless accomplishments — to make you dilettantes. Villa is not a polite finishing school. Nor would she thrive on an enrollment of the intellectually lazy, of the misguided, the rudderless. Rather, Villa is for earnest young people.

On the other hand, it would be tragic if a student were here at the sacrifice of ideals, for example, if he were studying principally to equip himself for moneymaking. Such a purpose appears sordid face to face

with Christ's words: "Be not anxious . . . what you shall eat . . . what you shall put on." Few things so offend good taste or bring pitying smiles as excess money in the hands of the foolish. Consider the painted woman wearing expensive clothes in bad taste.

Since man is created superior to the animals and just a little below the angels, Mother Church is solicitous for his life and happiness, not only in the hereafter, but also for his days on earth. She is aware of his affinity with the angelic hosts through his spiritual soul; she is constantly reminding him to keep his physical nature in subjection to his higher faculties, to lift his eyes to the high mountains.

The disciplines to which you are subjecting yourselves are hoped to give you excellence in two great fields. For the most important purpose of Catholic education is to fit you with a firm spiritual foundation and an attitude of striving for moral perfection, heaven being your goal. The secondary purpose is to train you in the use and enjoyment of your intellectual gifts, and in the knowledge and evaluation

of our heritage from former ages in the arts and sciences. Backgrounds are the springboard from which the imagination takes flight to solve the problems you will face.

Your liberal education is designed to help you form powers of judgment free from the prejudices which oppress: to form powers of discernment enlightened with a knowledge of the true, filled with a love of the good, and delighted by the beautiful. Your college training, to be well rounded (integrated), should help you know and appreciate the noble creations of the human mind, whether in philosophy, literature, music or art; it should help you to form such a taste for finer things that you will disdain the low, the lewd and the vulgar. In other words, your liberal education should prepare you for eternal citizenship in the kingdom of God; and for full, rich citizenship in the world of today.

Man has always been a creator of beautiful and useful structures and objects, a shaper of exalted thought into expressive language, a singer giving voice to the profound thoughts and emotions which surge through his being. It has always been characteristic of man to use his God-given faculties to work and mold the matter and sounds of nature in creating a more beautiful environment. Cloth and dyes, paintings and carvings; pots, pans, temples and harps; jewels, psalms and epic tales have all enriched life in man's earthly quest for the beauty which obscurely mirrors the Eternal Beauty.

Yet without understanding of what is seen and heard, much, if not most of the beauty shining from yesterday's and today's works of art is lost on the individual. Training is necessary to understand and appreciate the quality of things. The whole range of the arts must be revealed, and the main points made to stand out.

Physical blindness is from God; spiritual and aesthetic blindness is self-imposed. The deaf man cannot hear the blazing glories

of a Beethoven symphony; the narrow man will not hear them; the untrained man cannot appreciate them. We cannot love what we do not know. Let me repeat that: we cannot love what we do not know. Unless we sow seeds of beauty in our lives we can expect only drabness. Even those who aspire after beauty — but are not educated in its meaning or its principles — have only a vague grasp of its potentialities. There come to mind those who seek a better type of Christmas card and rely on higher price as a standard of beauty. Then there are the record collectors who rely on the hit-tune ratings or the advice of the pretty record clerk. Even when they have gems in their collection how often do they know how to enjoy their records thoroughly?

Education has been emphasizing technology, with the result that in some schools the social sciences and humanities are being crowded to the sidelines. Such is not the case in a college of liberal education, even though the arts today are at a disadvantage everywhere.

Youth is a time of adventure — of intellectual and spiritual awakening. The glorious world about us calls for interpretation and penetration with the vision of enlightened young eyes and minds. Religion, philosophy, science, literature, art and music are God's gifts to you to enjoy. Knowledge in these fields is the hallmark of a liberal education. But isn't it true that most of us know little of art and music? Isn't it true that without broadening our knowledge we will be lacking a vital part of our intellectual equipment?

You are to be congratulated if, by the end of your college days, you will have laid the foundation of a lifelong quest and appreciation of beauty in the arts for your use and enjoyment — whether of works of your own devising or that of others — because the arts come from God, remind us of God and lead us back to God.

*George Higdon*



# NEWS & COMMENT

C.U. - C.A.A. WORKSHOPS on Art are scheduled for June 12th to June 23rd at Catholic University. See the Easter issue of the *Quarterly* for a detailed description of the Workshop on the Art Program in Catholic Secondary Schools and for the Workshop on Art in Catholic Elementary Schools. Experienced and successful teachers of art, authorities on art education, as well as philosophers and artists will discuss the various problems of the teaching of art and its part in the Catholic education of youth. Don't miss this opportunity. For complete information about the workshop plan, registration and living accommodations, write directly to the Director of Workshops, Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D.C.

ETHEL THURSTON, author of "Ethos in Music," writes: "After studying in Paris, the doctrine of ethos in music appears to have worked on me. While teaching and studying at Manhattanville College under the late Georgia Stevens, R.S.C.J., there was the opportunity to hear Gregorian chant every day as it weaves about the drama of the Church year. I owe my conversion to Catholicism largely to the unknown composers who wrote this music. . . ." Miss Thurston is on the faculty of Hunter College and is at present finishing a Ph.D. in music with a year spent at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto.

SISTER M. FLORENTINE, O.S.F., who reviews *Plants of the Bible*, holds a doctorate from Niagara University and is head of the Biology Department of Rosary Hill College, Buffalo, New York.

ILLUSTRATIONS on pages 116 and 130 were made by Carl W. Merschel for *The Priesthood of Christ*, the proceedings of the National Liturgical Week, 1951. They are

reprinted here through the courtesy of The Liturgical Conference.

Our cover design by Adé de Bethune shows St. Luke in his Apocalyptic guise.

SISTER MADELEVA'S POEM, "Prayer Before Music," is taken from *A Song of Bedlam Inn and Other Poems* published in 1946 and is reprinted here through the courtesy of St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, New Jersey.

FATHER THOMAS F. STACK, director of the Connecticut-New York Region of the C.A.A., reports a regional meeting held April 18th at the College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, New York. The theme of the meeting, "Art in the Christian Home," was amplified in a major address by Miss Florence Roll of Brooklyn College. The business meeting was conducted by Sister Noreen, S.S.N.D., of the Notre Dame of Maryland College, and the feature of the afternoon was a performance by members of the King-Coit Children's Theatre. An exhibition of contemporary Catholic artists was an integral part of the day's program.

1953 C.A.A. CONVENTION will be held at Newton College of the Sacred Heart, Newton, Mass. Mother Louise Keyes, R.S.C.J., has graciously offered the facilities of the college for the convention and is taking an active part in planning the program which will be built around the theme, "Art and All Nations." Convention dates and program will be announced in the next issue of the *Quarterly*.

GRAILVILLE, Loveland, Ohio, is sponsoring a six week seminar "Art and Culture" from July 8th to August 16th. This is one of a series of six seminars planned to help the participants to contribute to the "restoration of all things in Christ."







